

fiction,, if Edmond About seemed to have run to
 seed prematurely with his interminable novel, "La Vieille
 Eoche," Octave Feuillet was writing his best book,
 "Monsieur de Camors." And if the historical novel, as Dumas
 had conceived it, had declined to mere trash, those
 well-known literary partners, Erckmann-Chatrian, by
 transforming it and dealing exclusively with the period of the
 Revolution and the First Empire, were achieving repeated
 successes, their popularity being the greater among the
 Parisians on account of the Republican spirit of their writings. Then
 the foibles of the time were vividly illustrated by
 Taine's amusing "Graindorge," and Droz's "Monsieur, Madame,
 et Be'be'," the last as strange a medley of immorality, wit,
 and true and honest feeling as ever issued from the press.
 But there was no redeeming feature in the nonsensical stories
 of semi-courtesans to which the brilliant Arsene
 Houssaye had declined; no shade of literary merit in the wild,
 unending romances with which Ponson du Terrail
 harrowed the feelings of every Parisian doorkeeper and
 apprentice. Perhaps the best serial writer of the time was It!mile
 Gaboriau, for though his style was devoid of any literary
 quality, he was ingenious and plausible, and by the exercise of
 these gifts raised the detective novel of commerce from

the depths in
which he found it.

But a delightful story-teller was coming to
the front
in the person of young Alphonse Daudet, who,
since his
arrival in Paris some nine years previously,
had made his
way sufficiently well to secure the performance
of a one-act

(March, 1866), and when Got, one of the performers, had
occasion to exclaim,
." England, the land of liberty ! " nearly the entire audience,
composed of the
intellectual leaders of Paris, rose and applauded
tumultuously, in spite of
the Emperor's presence. He was deeply impressed by this
demonstration.